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PAVED STREETS

PAVED STREETS

By ELIAS LIEBERMAN

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TO MY WIFE

THE author acknowledges with thanks the courtesy of the editors of Everybody's, The Outlook, Munsey's, Puck, Judge, Harper's Weekly, The Designer, The American Hebrew, Snappy Stories, Breezy Stories, Town Topics, The Boston Transcript, The New York Times and The Sun, in granting permission to reprint the verses contained in this book.

CREDO

I believe
That there are greater things in life
Than life itself;
I believe
In climbing upward
Even when the spent and broken thing
I call my body
Cries "Halt!"
I believe
To the last breath
In the truths
Which God permits me to see.
I believe
In fighting for them;
In drawing,
If need be,
Not the bloody sword of man
Brutal with conquest
And drunk with power,
But the white sword of God,
Flaming with His truth
And healing while it slays.

I believe
In my country and her destiny,
In the great dream of her founders,
In her place among the nations,
In her ideals;

I believe
That her democracy must be protected,
Her privileges cherished,
Her freedom defended.
I believe
That, humbly before the Almighty,
But proudly before all mankind,
We must safeguard her standard,
The vision of her Washington,
The martyrdom of her Lincoln,
With the patriotic ardor
Of the minute men
And the boys in blue
Of her glorious past.
I believe
In loyalty to my country
Utter, irrevocable, inviolate.

Thou, in whose sight
A thousand years are but as yesterday
And as a watch in the night,
Help me
In my frailty
To make real
What I believe.

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SOULS AND STREETS

I AM AN AMERICAN

I am an American.
My father belongs to the Sons of the Revolution;
My mother, to the Colonial Dames.
One of my ancestors pitched tea overboard in Boston Harbor;
Another stood his ground with Warren;
Another hungered with Washington at Valley Forge.
My forefathers were America in the making:
They spoke in her council halls;
They died on her battle-fields;
They commanded her ships;
They cleared her forests.
Dawns reddened and paled.
Stanch hearts of mine beat fast at each new star
In the nation's flag.
Keen eyes of mine foresaw her greater glory:
The sweep of her seas,
The plenty of her plains,
The man-hives in her billion-wired cities.
Every drop of blood in me holds a heritage of patriotism.
I am proud of my past.
I am an American.

I am an American.
My father was an atom of dust,
My mother a straw in the wind,
To His Serene Majesty.
One of my ancestors died in the mines of Siberia;
Another was crippled for life by twenty blows of the knut;
Another was killed defending his home during the massacres.
The history of my ancestors is a trail of blood
To the palace-gate of the Great White Czar.
But then the dream came—
The dream of America.
In the light of the Liberty torch
The atom of dust became a man
And the straw in the wind became a woman
For the first time.
"See," said my father, pointing to the flag that fluttered near,
"That flag of stars and stripes is yours;
It is the emblem of the promised land.
It means, my son, the hope of humanity.
Live for it—die for it!"
Under the open sky of my new country I swore to do so;
And every drop of blood in me will keep that vow.
I am proud of my future.
I am an American.

BROTHERS

Noon in the park . . . A tropic sun
  Dazzles with light and chokes with heat.
Sleepers about you . . . Notice one
  Stretching his length on a wooden seat.
His face is blotched and puffy and seared,
  Sweat drips from the clammy skin;
Flies romp on a stubble of beard,—
  A bundle of dirt with a soul therein.

Noon at the club . . . A welcome shade
  Dulls the light and cools the heat.
Gentleman seated . . . Lemonade
  Dashed with cognac and something sweet.
Arms dangling limply down,
  Feet tapping the polished floor . . .
Yawning and stretching . . . No one in town . . .
  Not a soul . . . What a beastly bore!

THE QUEST OF PIERROT

Wistful and pleading, white of face,
He watches the crowd — like a dream — pass by;
And now he pirouettes back a pace,
And now he stifles the ghost of a sigh.
But though, in the glare of the bluish light,
Myriads drift to an oubliette
Of vistas narrowing left and right,
He looks in vain for Pierrette.

Tender and yearning and half afraid,
Like a frightened fawn in a sudden shower
Whom lightning dazes,
He treads the mazes
Of city streets,
Pauses — retreats —
Gazes amused at the burghers staid —
Stops to admire the beauty or dower
Fate has granted some winsome maid —
But ever he shakes his head, ah no!
There is only one for Pierrot.
And her — Pierrette —
In a lifetime span
Though the world forget,
He never can.

Finger on lip and saucer eyes,
  He seeks in vain where violins,
Like prophets false of paradise,
  Glorify man in his frailties and sins;
Midas is there with his touch of gold
  And maidens, too, with smiles firm-set
That flash no mirth but leave one cold—
  Alas! He finds no Pierrette.

Drooping, he stumbles to Thespis' mart
  Where genius jingles the lilt of the times;
Or the times, perhaps, too crass for art,
  Demand nepenthe from mummers and mimes;
He bows his head and weeps! What though
  The swaying chorus dazzles—yet
No charm is there for Pierrot—
  He can not find his Pierrette.

Night—the stars—a city park—
  The shelter of boughs and a friendly seat—
He thinks of her in the murmuring dark,
  Forgets his aches and his weary feet.
The world will move in its trivial way,
  Will turn to dross its fume and fret
And lose its soul—but ah! one may
  In dreams be ever with Pierrette.

Did not Vulcan, dull at his forge,
  Pause in his toil — listen — grow mute,
A throb in his heart and a lump in his gorge,
  As he heard the music of Orpheus' lute?

In the little back room (the only one
  Besides his shop) no worries lurk
To drag his soul from its chosen fun
  And hem it in with his daily work;
Spring dwells eternal for here is set
  The solace for toil through the countless days,
An ancient piano, a modern spinet;
  And on this my shoemaker plays — and plays.

He caresses her keys with toil-gnarled hands;
  He woos her and wrings from her tinkling heart
Murmurs of sympathy — she understands
  What love may yearn for and love impart.

Men seek the gleam as the years plod by,
  Dawns flush and wane and centuries lapse;
In search of the Holy Grail they hie
  Like my valorous Knight of the Leather
    Scraps;
And who shall say that the sacred gleam,
  The quest for which makes man sublime,
May never appear in a cobbler's dream,
  Redeeming his soul from the dust and grime?

Smug with the fat of the world our souls
  Are lulled to sleep and often fail,
As they blink their eyes at the money goals,
  To see beyond them the shining Grail;
The gleam grows dim as the spirit lags
  And the solace of dreams may never be had
By him who snores on his money bags,
  Though it come to the toiler with hammer and
    brad.

Tap, tap, hammer; tap in cobbler time;
Tap, tap, hammer; tap away the grime,
Water-pail and boot-tree, shop of murk and must,
Awl and thread and polish; tap away the dust;
Tap away his stool and bench, the scattered
    leather scraps,
My shoemaker is dreaming as he taps, taps, taps.

THE RETORT IMPOSSIBLE.

The pronoun twins of repartee
In Jokeland known as He and She
Addressed each other angrily.

Said He: "I often long for wings;
I'm tired to death of saying things
That merely draw your witty flings."

Said She: "You need not say a word;
A clothing dummy is not heard;
Just be yourself to look absurd."

Though through his heart her answer tore,
This, too, like other shafts, he bore;
The Jokesmith had not written more.

WHAT THE CITY SAID

Be not afraid, for if you are, — you die!
  Of coward lives I daily take my toll;
And only he who bravely scorns to fly
  Perceives the god-like will of me, the soul.
The craven whimpers, "Lo! Four million men
  And each one turns to me a face of stone."
If he but knew, he might take heart again,
  For even they feel pity-starved, alone.

Be not afraid; for if you are, — you die!
  The giants, ribbed of steel, that stretch their hands
To grasp the stars, disdain an earth-born sigh;
  Each mammoth pile the tomb of weaklings stands!
But if, you trembling manikin, you're bold,
  Then — open sesame — there gleams revealed
The wealth of Ali Baba's treasure hold,
  A robber store of gems and gold concealed!

Be not afraid; for if you are, — you die!
  They call me Bagdad! Mark! The Calif's knife
Will stroke your neck before you dare to cry
  To Allah that he spare your worthless life.
Ah! Hear the Calif's rage, his angry stamp;
  He lowers dark at you; he means to kill.
You laugh at him? He brings Aladdin's lamp.
  Salaam to you! What is my master's will?

THE PLAY LAST NIGHT

The play last night! It might have been
  Of my own life the counterpart;
My eyes went dim with tears unseen;
  I heard a dirge within my heart.

Like me, the lass upon the stage,
  Bereft of all that brightens life,
Her faith and love, was left to wage
  Against the world a losing strife.

Like me, she felt the gossip's tongue;
  She bowed to babbling calumny;
She argued with him, pleaded, clung;
  He left her, too, as one left me.

But just before the curtain fell
  I saw her shattered fortunes mend;
He came to her — and all was well;
  Alas! Not mine the happy end!

THE RACING CAR

Meteors whiz through the waste of space,
  Planets course through the open sky;
All the world at a blinding pace
Madly whirls in a cosmic race,
  And so do I.

I bend to a rocking, swaying thing
  That hurtles on in a wake of fire;
It croons to Death as I clutch and cling,
  But it sings the song of my heart's desire.

The breath of life
Is speed and strife;
A hero's meed
Is strife and speed;
  Though pulses hammer and senses reel,
  Ecstasy dwells in my throbbing steel.
  Men must venture and men must die;
  We are creatures of destiny, you and I.

Masses of faces cover the bank;
  Murmurs of voices blend from afar;
Master of lever, throttle and crank,
  I grind ahead in my lurching car.

I speed ahead like a spirit free,
  I leap for my goal like a god of the sun;
The universe totters in frenzied glee
  Along with me—for the race is won!

MY ALARM CLOCK

I doze. . . . I drowse. . . . It sings to me:
"The dawn has flushed in the eastern sky!"
I toss. . . . I blink. . . . It murmurs:
"See!
There is much to be done ere the sun rides high.
There is much to be done! My knight, arise!
Adventure beckons for bold emprise;
And Love lures on with dream-lit eyes.
Burr . . . ing! Ting-a-ling-ling!
Arms and the man I sing."

It whispers low, "A maid, perchance,
May need a valorous knight. Advance!
Charge the dragon! Shiver the lance!
Draw your sword! The beast may hold
Besides the maid a store of gold.
The world is full of gems and of hearts
And he who first on the quest departs
May have them all.
Ting-a-ling-ling!
Arms and the man I sing!"

Thus might it speak! What it really does
With spiteful rattle and maddening buzz
Is this: "Again asleep, you shirk!
Get up, get up, and go to work!"

RUBAIYAT OF A FLAT DWELLER

Poor dub, awake! The neighbors' hoarse alarm
Has robbed your morning doze of all its charm.
For lo! He sets the thing at half-past five,
A frightful hour, to keep his job from harm.

And though, perchance, you need not rise till eight,
What boots the will of man against his fate?
The waiter, misnamed dumb, will serve to shake
With creak and buzz the sleep from any pate.

Each morn a thousand noises seems to bring;
And though you writhe in bed and madly cling
To pillow, blanket, sheet, — no hope!
Your goat is got; you can not do a thing.

Alas, the milk is gone! No tracer shows
Who take the stuff from you or whence it goes;
But he who lives below and takes your tips,
He knows about it all, he knows, he knows.

Yes, that perverted tank you call the Jan-
Itor, who works the game to suit his plan,—
Look not to him for help, for he, mayhap,
Has seething milk of yours within his can.

A janitor who scorns the vinous bough,
A clock next door that cannot raise a row,
A flat without a phonograph next door,—
Ah, any rooms were Paradise enow!

FROM A BATTERY PARK BENCH

Giant-keeled, she flings the spray
  Lightly by in queenly scorn,
As she passes from the bay
  Toward the mighty ocean borne.
On to foreign lands and seas,
  Go, thou thing of steel and steam!
Here upon my bench at ease
  I shall follow in a dream.

Then I shut my eyes and view
  Many queer, attractive sights—
Waters colored turquoise blue,
  Phosphor seas on tropic nights,
Dusky men in sandaled feet,
  Pattering their way along
Through a narrow Eastern street
  Teeming with a noisy throng—

Cities, castles, colonnades,
  Winding rivers, foreign sods,
Vast cathedrals, strange arcades,
  Moldy shrines of ancient gods,
Storied nooks of all the earth,
  See I as I take my trip—
Passage gratis, cabin berth—
  On the park bench, phantom ship.

ROMANCE IN THE CITY

Before the dawn has paled the night's blue blur,
  Romance takes wand in hand and starts her quest
  Like Ariel at Prospero's behest
To seek for hearts where men and women stir.

And no man knows the subtle trick thereof,
  But when she halts a lad upon the street
  And smiles at him, his heart begins to beat
A million songs whose mad refrain is love.

JUNE: IT ALL DEPENDS

(*A reversible rime*)

Thy { scented / humid } winds are wild with { glee / woe }
Thy { brilliant / swollen } skies are { gay / dull } with { mirth / dread }
O June, forever { stay with me / from me go }
I'll tune my lyre to { sing thy birth / wish thee dead }

A PEDDLER IN THE SHOPPING DISTRICT

For hours you stand and watch the crowd, pell-mell
Go bustling by. No call for buttons, laces!
Why don't you scan those rigid, weary faces?
They long for peace, but that you cannot sell!

PASTEL

Autumn leaves in russet and brown,
Autumn leaves in red and gold;
The wind is shaking them trembling down
Dank with fog and chilled with cold.

Little mounds on the wind-swept heath,
Little mounds of russet and red;
The ghost of a sigh and a hero's wreath
For the Belgian lads whom the wind mourns dead.

THE PIPES

(As Poe might have jingled it)

Hear the knocking on the pipes!
Frigid pipes!
With what agonies of terror
Now their metal presence gripes!
Hear the tenants beating, beating,
Begging for a little heating
From the pipes;
Hear them beating and entreating
For a scanty dole of heating
Bought and paid for,
Stopped and stayed for;
But the ghoul who lives below
And who battens on the tips
Listens calmly to the cadence
As it rises and it dips.
And he doesn't care a rapping
For the anxious tenants' tapping
On the pipes, pipes, pipes!
How he laughs,
How he chaffs,
As he keeps time, time
In a merry Runic rhyme
To the tintinabulations that in vain insistence beat
For our rightful share of heat;

To the discords as they scream
For our frugal meed of steam
From the pipes, pipes, pipes, pipes,
Pipes, pipes, pipes—
From the icy-hearted monster
And his pipes!

THE MODERN OMAR

L'Allegro: Midnight

A million lights flare up. . . . You seem divine. . . .
Prismatic colors flood your fragile grace;
Aurora crowns your hair and warms your face.
Another glass! The world and you are mine!

Il Penseroso: The Morning After

Alas! The Song of Songs was never meant
For dolts like me with souls and feet of clay;
Next time it lures me on, I'll turn away.
Some copper coins are left; the gold is spent.

THE FLIGHT OF A SUNBEAM

I saw you throbbing,
  On mischief bent,
  As away you went,
Brilliantly bobbing.

Your dance beguiling
  A little child
  With antics wild,
He gurgled, smiling.

Flashing and flying
  On dress parade,
  You sought a maid
And eased her sighing.

Glancing and gleaming'
  Athwart a youth,
  He glimpsed a truth
Which set him dreaming.

Dazzling and whisking
  Before a mule,
  The solemn fool
Kicked heels a frisking!

Gracefully veering,
  You charmed a sage
  To write a page
Of humor cheering.

And gleefully springing
Back to your skies,
You gladdened my eyes
And left me singing!

THE VENDOR OF DREAMS

"*If there were dreams to sell!*" — *Beddoes*

Garbed in a motley suit,
Waving a bladder of air,
And crowned with a cap and bells,
He looms in the thoroughfare;
Enveloped in phosphor fire,
Spectrally gaunt he seems
As he offers his wares at the curb —
A fantastical vendor of dreams.

"Oyez! From the storehouse of time,
Beautiful, crystalline dreams,
Reveries, fancies, and hopes,
Suffused with the roseate gleams
That play on a poet at birth
And wimple at dawn of the day!
Oyez! Ye women and men,
Ye mortals of earth, oyez!

"Here are the hopes that are dead,
  Alive in your vanished youth;
The glorious rule of the right,
  The radiant triumph of truth;
Power to do and to dare
  Free to the weaklings of earth;
Ambition attained at a bound—
  Dreams of a fabulous worth!

"Health for the tottering frame,
  Blood for the cheek that is pale,
Innocence, freshness of heart,
  The fountain of youth is for sale!
Love for the maid who is spurned,
  Relief for a sob or a sigh;
I am a vendor of dreams—
  Buy! Buy! Buy!"

FROM A BRIDGE CAR

River inscrutable, river mysterious,
  Mornings or evenings, in gray skies or blue,
Thousands of toilers in gay mood or serious,
  Workward and homeward have gazed upon you.

Swirling or sluggish, but ever inscrutable,
  Sparkling or oily, but never the same;
You, like the city, mysterious, mutable,
  Tremble with passions which no one can name.

THE TOWER

A magic symbol urging goals unwon,
  'Round which the rushing shadow falls;
  There profit lures, dreams dance, ambition
    calls, —
Bagdad, Golconda, Camelot in one.

THE CATHEDRAL

A vault of scattered stars is overhead;
  And, reaching hands of stone for stellar fires,
  The wingless monuments of man's desires
Seem darting up — but cling to earth instead.

DAWN IN THE CITY

A morning zephyr lifts the screen of gray
  That hides the stage and, like a show-
    man shrewd,
  He sets the light so that the prologue, viewed
In rose, contrasts the garish acts of day.

THE THEATRE CROWD

Oblivion or life? Both youth and age
  Pass brilliant-eyed within the playhouse door;
  And from it turn with echoed laughter; or
In pensive mood, if life had crossed the stage.

A STREET CROSSING

Like hunted game, now darting here, now there,
  They cross in haste the traffic-glutted street;
  Amidst the maze of cars and cabs their feet
Go pitter-patter, hasting ever — where?

WINTER NOCTURNE: SUBWAY EXIT

From underground come creeping forth the
gnomes
Who toiled by day to spin the cloth of gold
On many looms. Anon, a gust of cold
Attacks the rout and sweeps them to their homes.

FONETIC

A wise philosopher obtained
His doctorate degree.
And being wise, he rendered it
In language somewhat free:
Instead of writing Ph. D—
To all persuasion deaf,
He used the phonic substitute,
And signed himself D. F.

AT THE OPERA

Are you the lass I used to know—
  My barefoot girl of æons past;
My nut-brown maid of long ago?
  Can this be you and I—miscast?
In décolleté, and grandly pale—
  It seems so queer! But he that gave
The gems you wear could hardly fail.
  A princess you, and I—a knave.

The music thrills you. Violins
  With muted strings can plead so well!
You look at me—the charm begins
  To work—may God prolong the spell!
Crescendo now my throbbing heart
  Would madly blot what happened since!
I seem to play my rightful part,
  A princess you, and I—a prince.

The music dies; the lights flare up;
  A stranger helps you with your cloak;
My lips have touched the bitter cup;
  I drain it, lees and all—I choke!
The strains had led my wits astray,
  They spun a dream for me, your slave;
But fate ordains another way,—
  A princess you, and I—a knave.

A MAN OF LETTERS

When Clegg was young, the first degree
He learned to blab was A. B. C.

In adolescence, formally,
A college tagged on him A. B.

Another parchment came his way
That dubbed the stolid grind M. A.

But on he plugged; oh, on plugged he,
Until he nabbed the Ph. D.

In dreams he now began to see
An honorary LL. D.

But then, alas! The end is sad,
For poor old Clegg went raving mad.

Upon the walls incessantly
He scribbles Clegg and X. Y. Z.

And P. D. Q. and Q. E. D.
A literal calamity.

The keepers say he aims to get
A corner on the alphabet.

THE NATION TO ITS FOREIGN-BORN

Make thee my knight? My knights are sworn to vows
Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness
And, loving, utter faithfulness in love.
Tennyson.

Front face! Are you prepared to do your part?
Come here and tell me so; I know you can.
Stand straight and answer squarely, heart to heart;
You're not a grain of dust to step on, man!
Look up! The truth! I mean to try you out
When passion's heat is white, to search you through
And see if anywhere there lives a doubt
To whom and where your loyalty is due.

You're stanchly true? Then breathe a holy vow
That, come what may, your soul will cling to me.
I sheltered you, when first you came, and, now,
I want your faith and deeds, if need there be.
But if your thoughts go fondly back to where,
A subject once, you ate your potted meat,
Or where you scraped and bowed to kings, why there
You must return. You cannot stand white heat.

There is no middle course for loyalty,
And love should never waver. She who nursed
Your brawn and brain and soul, who dubbed you free,
Should stand alone in love, in duty first.
All this you stand resolved to pledge anew?
You call to witness Him that rules above?
Then rise, Sir Knight, my future rests on you,
On all your utter faith, your utter love!

THE BUZZING FLY

Buzz, buzz,
  Low, high,
How I hate you,
  Little fly!
Buzz, buzz,
  No rest;
How I loathe you,
  Little pest!

Buzz, buzz,
  So plain,
Ever at it
  On the pane.
Swipe! I have you!
  No? Too bad!
Missed again?
  I'm going mad!

Buzz, buzz,
  No peace;
Will that buzzing
  Never cease?
Now I've caught you!
  No! Too spry!
Wait a bit,
  You nasty fly!

Buzz, buzz,
  Fills my brain.
Swat!
What?
  Broken pane!

ON A FIFTH AVENUE BUS

Close-boarded, bar-crossed windows — blind façades!
  I cannot look within, but envy sees
  A world that is not mine and cushioned ease
I may not share . . . all, all behind those shades.

Two maidens pure as dawn ascend the bus . . .
  And earth reels from me . . . Airily I soar . . .
  The one is laughing Youth forevermore;
The other, Wonder, wide-eyed, tremulous.

Wild magic haunts the breeze, the open sky!
  I, too, am rich; I smell the greening sod;
  I lilt a song of soul-content to God;
And on we travel . . . Wonder, Youth and I.

INVITATION TO THE DANCE

Time: An autumn day
Scene: A wood
Characters: A cruel wind, A little leaf

THE WIND (boldly):
What maiden fancies make you blush
This pretty red?

THE LEAF (reprovingly):
You rudeness, hush!

THE WIND (boisterously):
With dainty sighs I will caress
Your crimson cheeks.

THE LEAF (timorously):
What brazenness!

THE WIND (sarcastically):
You're too demure! Will you, perchance,
Come off your perch and try — a dance?

THE LEAF (shuddering):
A dance? Oh, no. Excuse me, please,
I'm rather weak about the knees;
I'm poor at tangoing, I fear.

THE WIND (suavely):
I'll teach you well, my trembling dear.

THE LEAF (fluttering):
Oh, sir! Be kind enough to wait!

THE WIND (blustering):
Regrets! I never hesitate.
Let's one-step then — come on — I'll blow
Your scruples to the —

THE LEAF (falling):
Wind, I go!

A LESSON IN VERSE

The editors gave B. A. Hack
  Five cents a word. He smote
His hand upon his noble knob
  And this is what he wrote:—

"Fain would the horned moon eftsoons
  Dart out beyond the cloud,
Fain would its pointed points retreat
  Astern the opal shroud,
While quiv'ring on the heaving sea
  The falling moonbeams fall,
And shiv'ring on the rolling deep,
  Remember Neptune's call."

But when the editors resolved
  To pay him for the thought,
The manuscripts of B. A. Hack
  A different message brought:—

"A horned moon,
  A hind'ring cloud,
A mad retreat
  Astern the shroud;
On heaving seas
  The moonbeams fall
And shiv'ring list
  To Triton's call."

A skillful master of his art,
He later, with a frown,
Tore up his first attempt and said
He ought to " boil it down."

For, after all, the whole blamed thing,
He thought in cynic glee,
Can best be said — ah, noble head! —
" The moon shone on the sea."

THE KING OF LOVE

Dedicated to Dr. Stanton Coit, founder of the University Settlement, Rivington and Eldridge streets, the first settlement in America

The street is all a-throb with sleepless life.
There beats upon the ear a mad refrain
Of peddlers hawking wares. The very lights
Of Rivington are blatant as the cries
That blend into the thunder of the cars.
A haggling crone berates a bearded Job
Who curses loud and often at his fate
Before he takes the stinted dole she gives.
As if to mock the pair, a joyous strain,
The lilting Czardas, filters through the hum
From out a hall where two have plighted troth.
Amid the rattle and the clamor of their lives
A golden strand had slipped the loom of Fate.
A boy is chanting ballads on the street
And round about him gapes the idle throng
Their mission stayed — to listen and to yearn
For luring dreams of unattained desires,
For life to fill the veins of still-born hopes.
A Babel of confusions fills the air,
The senses riot in a Bacchanal
Of sights and sounds, — a Bagdad of the brain.

And through the grimy ruck there passes one
Who sniffs his way along in open scorn.
His hands are white although his heart is small;
His cheeks are red although his soul is pale;
And thus he drawls as on he minces by:
" What sweating, grasping humans — these I see,
What sordid trade, what guile, what warped ideals,
What gulfs between these lowly forms and me,
The scion of the culture of the world,
The master of the learning of the schools;
'Twixt them who grovel at the carts and me,
The final product of the rolling centuries;
How queer of garb and mien and speech they are,
I'll stoop to them and lift them to myself."
But on the thunder of the traffic booms along,
The plodding peddlers shudder at his touch;
The weary mothers crooning to their babes
Are sightless to his offer and his hand;
The children mock his very daintiness;
And Rivington, uproarious and wild,
In laughter, moaning, singing, sobs, — ignores
The final product of the rolling centuries.
" Ungrateful dolts," he scoffs, " their coarseness
Cannot grasp the higher things in Life,
Nor can it feel the nobler strain in me."

And now there comes along the crowded street
Another — humble, modest, gentle-voiced,
And from his eyes there gleams the flame of love:
" Oh, brothers, look above," he mildly says,

"The world is full of beauty, full of light,
And life is filled with tender harmonies.
The laughter born of fever, brethren, cease,
And cease the silent crying of the heart,
For yesterday is past; to-morrow lives for you!"

And lo! By him a miracle is wrought:
The thunder of the traffic dies away,
The plodding peddlers straighten at his touch;
The weary mothers crooning to their babes,
Extend them to the lull of his caress;
And Rivington, uproarious and wild
In laughter, moaning, singing, sobs — acclaims
The humble worker, reigning king of Love.

SONG OF THE MOTOR CAR

A long, lean stretch of a grayish road
For a lurching thing of steel;
A vanishing strip of dust to the goad
Of each swift pneumatic wheel.
It speeds from Eternity straight through Space
To a throttle's tug and strain,
And hurtling along at a maddening pace
Repeats in a frenzied refrain:

"Speed!

Through a rushing wind in the dark of night,
With the glare ahead of a giant light;
Though your throat is choked with the clots of dust,
Till I seem to fly over earth's dun crust,
I demand as my meed
Irresistible speed!"

A man bespattered with dirt and grime
Bends over intent on his goal.
He hearkens the beat of its thunderous time
Controlling its impulse — its soul.
His heart beats loud and his breath comes fast,
In the throes of a joyous pain;
The woods and the houses are scurrying past,
As it grinds in a wild refrain:

"Speed!

While my limbs are tense with a pulsing might,
Though my pace outstrip your human sight,
For the joy there is in it — the ecstasy lent,
Till my terrible force is completely spent,
I demand as my meed
Irresistible speed!"

THE PROBLEM PLAY

I heard the hero's labored talk,
His fervent declamation;
I saw him pace the stage, and walk
Its length in perturbation.
Would she leave him, or he leave her?
Had he the right to marry?
Would both of them to part demur?
Was it not wrong to tarry?

The critic with the sunken eye
Explained the situation.
His forehead bulged; a cultured sigh
Showed cultured exaltation.
A listless hearer at his side,
Of intellect far baser,
Exclaimed, "The problem's not denied,
But where on earth's the play, sir?"

DON'T KISS ME

John Thompson was a citizen
  Of credit and renown
But when a grippe germ entered him
  It brought John Thompson down.

With febrifuge and germicide
  And healing herbs full score
He fought the vicious little beast
  But still it vexed him sore.

And as he lay upon his cot
  He heard his doctor tell
" You may not kiss nor osculate
  Nor buss, till you are well."

" Nay, can you, John," the doctor asked,
  " Though this must cause you pain,
Can you forego the fond embrace
  Of Mistress Mary Jane? "

John Thompson was a cautious man,
  He knew the ways of germs,
How fast they multiply and breed,
  The cruel, septic worms!

Bold resolution fired his eyes,
  He spoke as doth a man:
" When Duty whispers low, ' Thou must,'
  The youth replies, ' I can! ' "

She came not in the rosy dawn,
  She did not come at noon;
His heart leaped up when in the eve,
  He heard her dainty shoon.

Compassion filmed her azure orbs,
  Her heart beat fast for fear;
But ere she swooped on him with love,
  He murmured in her ear:

" Don't kiss me, darling Mary Jane,
  A foe is armed to kill us,
The germ that bideth on my lips,
  The dreaded grippe bacillus.

Don't kiss me, darling Mary Jane,"
  With gestures epileptic,
The swain implored his darling lass,
  " Until I'm antiseptic."

And thus they bode till he was well,
  As prophylaxis fated;
Unhugged, unbussed, unkissed, unstrung,
  Nonplussed, unosculated.

SONG OF A SUBWAY CAR

" A subway car was grinding along
From stop to stop with a toil-worn throng;
It growled as it sped through the narrow lane
A dolorous tale to a dull refrain,
De-de-dun, de-de-dun;
To an often-repeated dull refrain,
De-de-dun, de-de-dun. . . .

" I speed through a sinuous vault underground,
Columned and pillared, rock-ribbed and round;
And this is the song of my innermost ken,
A song of women and sitting men,
De-de-dun, de-de-dun. . . .

" A woman hangs by a strap and reels,
A feverish flush her pallor conceals;
She is weary with working, faint — but then
Nothing is seen by my sitting men,
My newspaper-staring, sitting men,
De-de-dun, de-de-dun. . . .

" I stop with a jerk and the sweating guards
Breast the stream that nothing retards;
Out with 'em, in with 'em, off again,
Shop-girls jostled and sitting men,
Dull and expressionless sitting men,
De-de-dun, de-de-dun. . . .

"I speed through a sinuous vault underground,
Columned and pillared, rock-ribbed and round;
A thing of steel, I strain and I sway,
I am hollow and heartless but better than they —
My rows of vacuous, sitting men,
My newspaper-blinded, sitting men,
De-de-dun, de-de-dun, . . . "

CONEY ISLAND ON SUNDAY—AN IMPRESSION

Pleasure parading with fife and drum,
  Boom jig boom, boom jig boom!
Won't you be merry, stranger? Come!
  Boom jig boom, boom jig boom!
Forget the troubles you have to tell
On a bumpty bump or a carousel;
Crooked or straight or tall or thin,
Every one is a harlequin.
Laughter is tipsy; joy is drunk.
The treasure of Captain Kidd is sunk
Deep in the wells of a maiden's eyes;
The Golden Fleece of Jason lies
Ready to seize in her throbbing heart;
Argonaut bold from shop and mart,
Reel into step for the golden quest
And be as giddy as all the rest.
  Rat-a-tat-tat, rat-a-tat-tat,
We should worry where we're at!
  Whoop-de-doo, whoop-de-doo!
I'm silly myself, but so are you!

THE CHILDREN'S ARMY

No tune of tootling fife,
  No beat of the rolling drum,
And yet with the thrill of life
  The hordes of children come.
Freckled and chubby and lean,
  Indifferent, good and bad,
Bedraggled and dirty and clean,
  Richly and poorly clad,
They come on toddling feet
  To the schoolhouse door ahead;
The neighboring alley and street
  Resound to the infant tread.
Children of those who came
  To the land of the promising West,
Foreign of face and name,
  Are shoulder to shoulder pressed
With the youth of the native land
  In the quest for truth and light,
As the valorous little band
  Trudges to left and right.
Creed and color and race
  Unite from the ends of the earth,
Blending each noble trace
  In the pride of a glorious birth.
Race and hate and the past
  Fuse in a melting heat

As the little hearts beat fast
To the stir of a common beat.
A fresher brawn and brain
For the stock which the fates destroy
Belong to the cosmic strain
Of American girl and boy.

SONG OF THE STADIUM

(At the dedication of the stadium of the City College, May 29, 1915)

The song of youth is calling us,
The pipe of Pan enthralling us—
We hear the stirring echoes of a trumpet blast.
It banishes the clod in us,
It wakes the pagan god in us—
We follow, follow, follow, for the heart beats fast!

The gates are open, open wide,
And through them sweeps a steady tide
Of youth—of youth and life;
Their eyes are clear as woodland springs,
Their sinews taut as arrow strings,
Prepared for mimic strife.

In Rome each gladiator slave
A grim salute to Cæsar gave:
  " Before I die, I hail you! "
Your youth, O proud Metropolis,
Had rather pledge you loud with this:
  " Your sons shall never fail you!

" We'll strive for you with might and main,
We'll give you zeal of heart and brain,
  The uttermost we can;
Your need shall be a rolling drum—
Whene'er you want us, we will come!
  We pledge you to a man! "

  The song of youth is calling us,
  The pipe of Pan enthralling us—
We hear the stirring echoes of a trumpet blast;
  It banishes the clod in us,
  It wakes the pagan god in us—
We follow, follow, follow, for the heart beats fast!

SPRING AT THE FISH MARKET

Scene: Under the Williamsburg Bridge, lower East Side

Can it be that spring is stirring in the jostle of the mart,
Through the clamor and the clatter at the bearded huckster's cart,
Heard amid the dinning bicker of the women as they pass,
Felt amidst the noise and bustle of the densely moving mass?
Can it be that spring is present, softly breathing to the throng
All the world-old passion music of a new world waking song.

Of a winter loosened river
Onward rushing merrily;
Of the countryside a-quiver
With a vernal ecstasy;
Of the lazy dreams a-fleeting
Through an open breezy sky,
Of the human hearts a-beating
That the time of joy is nigh!

Strange it is, but in the jangle of the clanking
metal scales,
In the wearisome confusion of a hundred hurried
sales,
Wanders the enchanting goddess from the fields
of oversea,
And her voice is sweetest music as she whispers
tenderly
To the huddled men and women of the home-
stead vale and stream,
Conjuring a dear illusion with the pigments of a
dream.

Of a foreign hamlet lying
Near a grassy green expanse;
Of a faintly tremored sighing
In a wood of old romance;
Of a land where life was duty
To an emperor or king—
Reawakened to the beauty
Of a long-forgotten spring!

SHOLOM ALEICHEM

In Memoriam

Peace be with you, gentle scrivener,
You who make the weary laugh,
Though their backs are sorely burdened,
And they trudge with wander-staff.

Tears for you? No friend to sorrow
Is an author evermore
Who can place a merry twinkle
Where a tear had gleamed before.

Glad you lived and glad you left us.
In your volumes filled with mirth
Lives a never-failing solace
For the misery of earth.

Let us think of you with gladness;
Let us write of you with cheer;
For your monument — a people
Laughing, laughing all the year.

O. HENRY: IN MEMORIAM

(Died June 5, 1910)

In the twilight of the city, as I dreamed, as I dreamed,
Tangled shadows fell fantastic on the ever-pulsing street,
Little lights began to glimmer through the filmy veil of night
And I knew that work had ended by the homeward-turning feet.
Then a tide of men and women rolled before me from the west,
Breaking over into houses, into hall and alley swirled;
Back from shop and store and work-room to the refuge of the home;
Through the sluices of the city beat the power of the world.

And I wished I had his vision — he who saw and understood,
As he watched the men and women on the stage of everyday,
All the wrangling and the toiling and the bungling of the cast,
While it potters through the æons in the great Creation Play.

How I longed to sense the meaning of the God
behind it all,
Of the spirit as it brightens through the coars-
est human flesh,
Of the music, sweetly hidden in the roaring city
din,
Of the single purpose showing in the tangle of
the mesh.

Far below me boomed the thunder and the tidal
wave beat high.
On its crest I saw the mummers of the passing
comedy;
Shopgirls, idlers, peddlers, salesmen, errand-boys
with lagging feet,
Kind and sad and hostile faces in the swelling
human sea.
And in each I felt a story worthy of the master's
skill,
Sensed the presence of the passions that control
the human breast,
Knew an epic lived within them, dumbly waiting
to be told,
But a mind that knew the meaning slept in its
eternal rest.

What a world he left behind him, what a web of
wonder tales,
Fact and fiction subtly woven on the spinning
wheel of Truth!

How he caught the key of living in the noises of
the town,
Major music, minor dirges, rhapsodies of Age
and Youth!
In the twilight of the city, as I dreamed, as I
dreamed,
Watching that eternal drama in the ever-
pulsing street,
All about me seemed to murmur of the master
passed away,
And his requiem was sounded in the city's fever
beat.

TO ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

I have twisted my phrases and words,
  In a spirit that pries and destroys,
As children who potter and prod
  To solve their mechanical toys;
Till, tired at my arabesque turns,
  My pen sputters back at my brain.
I hungrily gaze at my screed,
  But the Critic within me cries, "Vain!".

In the dark of my doubt, as I toil,
  Like one melting dross in a mould,
To banish my base-flowing slag
  And change it, as you did, to gold;
I conjure Samoa, the isle
  Where your tomb meets the breeze of the sea;
Tusitala, my dearly beloved,
  I turn to you, yearning my plea:

Defend me from forfeiting Hope,
  From fashioning wares for the mart;
Inspire me, my master, to write
  With the red of the blood of my heart.
In the darkness that comes to us all,
  When our world is a Stygian night,
When we hesitate, stumble and reel,
  O lend me, my brother, thy light!

EDGAR ALLAN POE

And wan with listless watching, Hecate
  Beheld a student in a chamber dim
Invoke the bard. It was a votary
  Whose chant to strains of hidden cherubim
Came low and mournful through the moonlit air
To echo in the caves of blind Despair.

"Awake, thou matchless bard of Shadowland!
  Of women wondrous beautiful, but pale,
Of dreams alive; of cities on a strand,
  Illumed by phosphor seas; of Woe and Wail;
Divine musician, rend the earth and shake
Thy deathly slumber off — Awake! Awake!

"I long to hear the song of lost Lenore,
  In haunting rhymes and liquid measures sung,
To sense thy mighty soul in grief outpour
  A wild lament for her who died so young.
I bid that Death his gruesome work unmake,
I bid thee rise to Life — Awake! Awake!

"I crave the tremor of thy breathing lyre
  That mourns eternally for Doom and Sin,
That sings of keen regret and vain desire
  As softly sweet as muted violin.
Defy the sway of haughty Death and take
Thy place with us again — Awake! Awake!

"A longing mad I feel my soul consume
To wander forth with thee, where brooding dwell
Thy dear ones, Eulalie and Ulalume;
Thy loved ones, Elinor and Annabel.
In suppliant tone for mine and their sweet sake
I rouse thee from thy sleep—Awake! Awake!"

But wan with listless watching, Hecate
Beheld the student beat his troubled breast,
For thus a vagrant wind that wandered free
With plaintive tone into his ear confessed,
An ancient wind that knew the days of yore,
"The bard you seek shall meet you — nevermore."

JOSEF ISRAELS: IN MEMORIAM

(1824–1911)

When the fisher-folk of the Netherland coast
On perilous cruises sped,
When the howling wind and the swirling foam
A message of danger read—
There was one to measure the dread of the sea
For the helpless women then,
Whose bread was found on the crest of the wave
By the sturdy fishermen.

There was one to read the cry of the heart,
As it sobbed to the lonely stone,
On the mound of the man who came no more,
Who left her all alone—
Alone to the wind and the sea and the storm
That had claimed their murderous fill;
Alone to the break of the taunting deep
And a cottage, void and still.

There was one to sound the plumb of despair
In the wandering martyr race
That flies with the wind in the fearful round
Of an everlasting chase;
To note the patient shoulder shrug,
The pathos of mind and eye,
In the form of the man with the mortal wounds,
Who yet disdains to die.

Be good to the soul of the master, Lord,
  Who limned with a deathless hand,
The woes of the men whose mettle you try —
  The waifs of the sea and the land.
Be good to his artist soul, O Lord,
  For he ate of the bread of tears
And drank from the bitter cup of those
  Who count the leaden years.

THE "SPRING POEM" SATIRIST

Dedicated to Thomas R. Ybarra

Ybarra spilled a can of ink
  Upon a budding little leaf
And watched the tiny body shrink
    With grief.

A poet passed, and pitying
  The victim of his brother's spleen,
Wept over it, and lo! — the thing
    Turned green!

Ybarra threw a surly blot
  Across a cloudless, Maytime sky
And jeered to see the frowning spot
    Grow dry.

The poet moaned the base assault
  As from his faithful lyre he drew
Such plaintive sobs that soon the vault
    Turned blue!

Ybarra caught a vagrant breeze,
  In which he jabbed a cruel pen
To see if Zephyrs die with ease,
    But then

The poet healed the smarting breast
With balsam from a vernal spray
So well, it freshened toward the West
Away.

Now, what's the use, Ybarra, dear,
Of being churlish? Come and sing
Like all the rest of us who cheer
"To Spring!"

MAY RHAPSODY

Springtime has come with her whispering gladness
Susurrant Zephyrs sighing of bloom,
Yielding me ecstasies kin unto madness,
Flambeaux of incense a heart to consume;
Breathing of happiness,
Laughing with happiness,
Fragrant and rosy and banishing gloom.

Fresh as the Dawn that in primitive glory
Blushed with affright at the vision of Man,
Dewy as morn in Arthurian story,
Brimming with life as when Knighthood began,
Bubbling with merriment,
Bounding with merriment,
Springtime advances to linger a span.

Over her tresses a chaplet of flowers
Carelessly twined and a trifle askew,
Sprinkled with drops of her opulent showers
Or wet with the glittering touch of the dew;
Wondrously beautiful,
Wild-eyed and beautiful,
Trembling with joy at a World that is new.

Love is her boon to the soul-weary mortal,
  Love but a dream-enthralled being may know,
Wafting him back to the Paradise Portal,
  Lending him pinions to rise over Woe;
    Scattering violets,
    Pansies and violets,
  Faint with delights of a sweet Long-Ago.

ROSEMARY AND RUE

The leaves have fallen. Overhead
  The ghostly trees are bare;
In brown and red, on lowly bed
  A clan is sleeping there.
Perchance the solitary leaf
  That flutters in the blast
Recalls in quiverings of grief
  The brilliant summer passed.

The song of roses calls in vain
  And leaves for me and you
A haunting, sober, sweet refrain
  Of rosemary and rue,
Of rue and rosemary, my love,
  Of rosemary and rue.

In vain for mortal heart and way
  The fervent plighted vow!
The verdant spray of yesterday
  Is sere and withered now.
Perhaps the motley, fallen rout
  Remembers how, in spring,
It rustled promises devout
  Unto the branch to cling.

And now the song of wind and rain
  Is bringing me and you
A haunting, sober, sweet refrain
  Of rosemary and rue,
Of rue and rosemary, my love,
  Of rosemary and rue.

THE HOMECOMING

I roam the highways over and over
For the wisp of a gleam that leads me;
I trample the dust in the noon-day sun
And call — but it never heeds me;
I follow the gold to the slumbering west
Where the road and the sky arch play,
But the wisp of a dream on the border line
Eludes me — it will not stay.

For a man may fail to find the trail
That leads to his heart's desire,
But on he must through mud and dust
From dawn to evening fire.

But who is this in the highway standing,
She with the eyes that call me?
I am tired of the road, the sinuous road,
Her laughing eyes enthrall me.
I long for the feel of her cooling hand
On my hair and my throbbing brow;
Then take my love, O wife of my dreams,
I would cease my wandering now.

For we can not fail to find the trail
That leads to our heart's desire,
If love as guide with us abide
From dawn to evening fire.

RAIN SONG

Many a time in the æons past
I swished to the whip of the northern blast;
I romped in the sleet and rejoiced in the hail,
Fled with the whirlwind and danced with the gale.

Gently I fell to the crooning springs,
Benison bringing on watery wings;
Soft as the hand of a mother caressing
I fondled the earth and gave it my blessing.

Now as I fall, though I patter of sorrow,
I whisper the hope of a new tomorrow.
Every drop of me reaching the sod
Carries the grace and the pity of God.

TO A POET ON HIS TRAVELS

Gently, Wind,
  Temper thy stroke;
Shake the leaves
  On the giant oak;
But spare the bard
  In the threadbare cloak.

Softly, Rain,
  Fall on the heath;
Be kind to the wayfaring
  Men beneath;
And most to a lad
  With a poet's wreath.

Guide him, Moon,
  With a friendly ray,
When he wanders at night
  Lilting a lay,
To find in the dark
  His chosen way.

Grant him, Wood,
  In thy arbors dim,
Shelter in peril
  Of life or limb;
The love of a people
  He bears with him.

AN ANCIENT RACE

THE SON OF AN ANCIENT RACE

Suggested by a painting of the same name, the work of Josef Israels, in the Rijks Museum, Amsterdam.

A gas-lit gloom oppresses the shop,
  The air is heated and stale;
Persistent machines without a stop
  Rehearse a monotonous tale.
Before his task in a reverie,
  As the wheels drone on apace,
There pauses a scion of destiny,
  The son of an ancient race.

He dreams . . . that the Lord in the vanguard goes
  And blazes a triumph-trail
Of woe and defeat for Israel's foes!
  A million voices hail
In pæans of praise the glory of God!
  A glow illumines the face
Of the heir to the fat of the conquered sod,
  The son of an ancient race.

And then alone through the dark, long years
  He totters with timorous tread;
Alone, the prey of a thousand fears,

He learns to droop his head;
From the height of his pride he is downward hurled
To reel from place to place,
Mock of the nations and butt of the world,
The son of an ancient race.

The flesh pots of Egypt . . . then liberty,
Ambition, might, disdain,
And then . . . a cycle of misery,
A welter of blood and pain.
Will Israel's moan at the scourge of the rod,
As it echoes far through space,
Some day invoke the grace of God
For the son of an ancient race?

HOW LONG, O LORD!

In the weary night they come to me,
The tears that I left unshed,
When I trudged the thorny wilderness
With the sun-flame overhead.
I lie awake in the friendly night,
My soul too numb to pray,
Enjoying the cool of its velvet black
In the dread of the coming day.

For the day must come and the sting of it,
As I bend to the endless road,
The light must come and the pain of it,—
The bite of the lashing goad.
But this I know as I reel along
To the nations' hue and cry,
A burning truth in the hand of God:
I know that I must not die.

They say my soul is twisted and warped,
My ways are cringing and mean,
That I worship the bulk of the calf of gold,
That my hands are not white and clean;
They say — but a thousand reasons hold
To stalk the quarry then
When the lust for blood is hunger-felt
By the beast that dwells in men.

When Kindness is taught at the end of a rope,
And Love to the music of groans;
When Charity masks in a cloak of flame,
And Mercy in falling stones,—
What wonder the balm for the spirit fails
When the wounds are kept so fresh
Through countless years of active hate
In the rack of the tortured flesh?

I have ceased to long for the clasp of Love,
To dream of the smile of a friend,
I grip my trusty wander-staff
In a journey without an end.
My faith is strong as the primal rocks,
And deep as my tearless woes;
I am Job of the nations — heir of wrongs,
But why — Jehovah knows.

THE OTHER CHEEK

(From a Jewish standpoint)

Songs of hate for the newly stressed!
We who have borne the burden long
Scorn the feverish heat and zest
That finds a vent in poisoned song.
Blood ye take when the foe retreats,
Blood ye get when the foe breaks through.
Whatever the message the drummer beats,
It's hell for us and blood for you.

The star of David is dyed in gore,
Maccabee's daughters droop in shame;
Whatever the tale the cannons roar
For you, for us it is still the same.
At the shrine of God we pray for you,
We, the weakest and strongest of men;
On the fields of death we slay for you
Our very kin — and you slay us then.

If we should curse you, as you deserve,
If we should loose our burden of ire;
Planets would falter, suns would swerve,
Earth be swept by volcanic fire;
But we who crossed the Red Sea trail
When Egypt's star began to dim
Will live to see your hatred fail
As Pharaoh's did when he mocked at Him.

We who have borne the scourge of Rome
  Deem that your puny vaunts are vain;
Eternal rocks to the angry foam,
  We weathered the proud caprice of Spain.
Ye may wound us sore till our bleeding hearts
  Conjure death as a blessing, still
By the law of laws your venomous darts,
  Though rankle they must, can never kill.

God of Gideon, David and Saul,
  God of the prophet's holy tears;
Thou who markest the sparrow's fall,
  Thou who hast led us thousands of years,
Grant to us when they smite our cheek
  To turn the other to them and smile,
For we shall live though our lives they seek,
  But they are dying all the while.

THE BANNER OF GOD

This is a struggle of democracy against autocracy.
— Theme of President Wilson's address.

The deathless eye of Israel
  Beheld beneath the skies,
Ash-gray with battle smoke and death,
  Another banner rise.

And, floating high above the pall,
  That standard seemed to be
The word of God revealed to man
  By ancient prophecy.

"Through fire," it sang, "come follow me!
  The life Almighty gave
Had better far go back to Him
  Than dwell in any slave."

"Through blood-red mist," it chanted loud,
  "My soul exultant sings
The pæan of all that is to be,
  The dirge and doom of kings."

"Beat down," it called, "whatever binds —
  Your shackles, bolts and bars.
The dawn's pure blush is in my stripes,
  God's hope is in my stars!"

The heart of Israel surged high
As does the wind-blown sea;
"My flag!" he cried, "I pledge to you
My deathless fealty!"

ISRAEL'S BURDEN

Eyes like balls of molten madness stare and stare
the livelong night,
Reading what the fancy conjures with the dawn
of morning light.

Wraiths of humans fleeing, fleeing . . . moaning
an eternal " Why? "
Plod along deserted highways under sun and
star-lit sky.

Fields, though seamed with many furrows, bear
no crop for farm and town,
Over them the death-clouds hover like a mist-
gray mourning gown.

Messengers of fate vibrating through the sulphur-
laden air
Hum their hymns of hate unending and their
echo moans despair.

Israel! For thee the reaper sweeps his scythe on
hill and plain;
His the harvest of thy children and thy tears are
all in vain.

Whether in thy heart be Kaiser or the call of La
Patrie,
Whether fighting stanch for England or the land
that slaughters thee,

Thine the heavy, heavy burden; thine the toll of
lives to pay,
Thine the martyrdom of ages; thine a night that
knows no day.

If thy sorrow does not touch me, if thy pangs but
leave me cold,
If thy oft-recurring story seems a tale too often
told,

If I read thy plea for succor, dull to sense what
others bear,
Blind to all but self and callous how my luckless
brothers fare,

Shake my soul, O Lord, with thunder; wring my
heart with pity-spell;
Make me feel in this, my refuge, all the woe of
Israel.

Else the trumpet of the morrow, shrilling forth
the nobler day,
Will reveal my soul to judgment, sere and shriv-
elled, worn away.

ON THE OCCASION OF MR. SCHIFF'S BIRTHDAY, JANUARY 10TH, 1917

Israel rose from the cinders of sorrow,
Proud in her grief; her voice was mild;
" Men like you shape the new to-morrow,"
She said to her favorite son — and smiled.

" Men like you are the world's salvation;
They bless the spot wherever they be;
For them a pæan of all creation
Sounds high praise on land or sea.

" Giant soul! In the world's mad blindness
You see to heal its pangs and smarts;
You sow the seeds of human kindness,
You reap the harvest of thankful hearts."

THE KINGDOM OF POLAND

An eternal wanderer speaks

Lo! As I flee through the highways of men, on Time's immemorial sphere,
Phantasms come and phantasms go, but a dominant plan is clear.

Whenever a soul dies, shrivelled up, or a nation dries at the heart,
They are each swept back by the Maker of All to the darkness where all things start.

I have eaten bread to the sting of a lash and fled from the terror of flame;
I have wandered and suffered, wept and prayed — but that way Wisdom came.

I have learned to laugh at the tyrant's goad, the oppressor's bloody urge;
As he tortured me I mocked at him and sang his funeral dirge.

I knew he was wrong and could not last, that he could not change the plan
Made by the Changeless Powers That Be for the slow ascent of Man;

For his gradual climb from chaos-depth to the clearness of upper air,
For his rise to the sun of harmony from the slime of hate's despair.

Nations, like pilgrim-knights, may fare on a quest where weaklings fail;
When they raise the sword of truth and right, they find the Holy Grail.

When they flash the brand of bigotry, when their hearts are false, unjust,
Instead of the holy cup of Christ, they see but clouds of dust.

There is room to spare for kingdoms on earth — but the cry of the blood-soaked sod
Is not for another tyrant state, but a merciful kingdom of God.

Poland! Poland! Kneel to be crowned, but rise prepared for the test,
The joust of the ages in every clime for the cause of Man's oppressed.

Poland! Poland! Arm for the fray, unshackled, God-like, free;
Become the anointed champion of all who plod like me.

Of all who creep through the weary days to the
dreams of a sleepless night,
Fearing the dark, but fearing more the dawn and
the tell-tale light.

If not — like the rest of things outworn, nations
or creeds or men,
Back you must go to the bottomless pit and there
start over again.

THE GREAT STRUGGLE

SONG OF THE VOLGA BOATMEN

Drift, logs, drift, down the swift stream;
Float, logs, float, beyond the Port o' Dream.
The sunlight pats my Luba's cheeks
And makes them glow like wine;
The breeze brings fragrance once again
From cedar, birch, and pine.
A dirge-song died upon the wind
That dried my Luba's tears;
Her lips are dumb with answered prayer,
Her eyes with banished fears.

Batyushka Gosudar,
Wan wanes thy setting star.
Fallen art thou, Great White Czar.

Turn logs, turn, through the foam and swirl;
Glide, logs, glide, along the white whirl.
For me my Luba sits and waits,
For me a feast is spread;
No more like wolf-hound lean and lone
Must I devour my bread.
The jingling cow-bells tinkle pæans
Of home and joy to me;
My heart leaps God-ward like the blaze
That set my Russia free!

Batyushka Gosudar,
Wan wanes thy setting star.
Fallen art thou, Great White Czar.

CHANT OF LOYALTY

Firm as the furnace heat
Rivets the bars of steel,
Thus to thy destiny,
  Flag, are we plighted;
One are the hearts that beat,
One is the throb we feel,
One in our loyalty,
  Stand we united.

Many a folk have brought
Sinew and brawn to thee;
Many an ancient wrong
  Well hast thou righted;
Here in the land we sought,
Stanchly, from sea to sea,
Here, where our hearts belong,
  Stand we united.

Ask us to pay the price,
All that we have to give,
Nothing shall be denied,
  All be requited;
Ready for sacrifice,
Ready for thee to live,
Over the country wide,
  Stand we united.

One under palm and pine,
One in the prairie sun,
One on the rock-bound shore,
  Liberty-sighted;
All that we have is thine,
Thine, who hast made us one,
True to thee evermore,
  Stand we united.

LET THERE BE LIGHT!

(*Dedicated to the proposed Statue of Liberty that will be presented by the people of America to the people of Russia*)

Over the land that the Cossack had harried,
  Over the realm that a tyrant had wrung,
Verst upon verst let the glad news be carried,
  League upon league let the tidings be sung.
    The voice of the people,
      Mightier far
    Than the mandate of
      Emperor, Sultan or Czar,
    Has spoken the word
      That has banished the night,
    Has thundered in majesty,
      "Let there be light!"

Grant them, O Lord, who have drunk deep of
sorrow,
The cup of good-will that will toast their
release;
Them who have hungered in fear, on the morrow
Blessings of plenty and bounty of peace.
The wings of the raven
Had darkened their days,
Hiding the sun
And its comforting rays;
But now that the bird
Of ill-omen, in flight
Has vanished forever,
Let there be light!

We who have felt with them all of their sadness,
We who have marvelled the patience that bore
Knut, sword and fire, the devices of madness,
Send them a beacon from liberty's shore.
And they who had faltered
In darkness and dread
May fearlessly venture
To struggle ahead.
The torch-flare of freedom
Must guide them aright;
America calls to them
"Let there be light!"

SONG OF THE U-BOAT

I am blind of heart,
  I am blind of soul;
But I creep like life
  To a destined goal.
Through the nether sweep
Of the crafty deep
  I forge my way,—
No ripple above
  My course to betray.

I am charged with death,
  I am charged with hate;
And oh for the ship
  In my line of fate!
Her timbers rock
To the thud and shock;
  She sinks below:
My masterpiece
  Of red, red woe!

When Death will yield
  To Love and Life,
When the Law of God
  Will banish Strife,
I shall haunt the sea
  Like an unpurged sin
But the fish will stare
  At me — and grin.

TO THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

On the occasion of its Illumination, December 2nd

Pityingly, O Mother of Light,
You darted long rays
Into our darkness,
Calling to us as we wept
Or as we cowered in self-abasement.
"Come to me!" you said,
"Poor pawns in the game of royalty,
Come to me and learn once more
That man is made in the image of God."

We came, O Mother of Light!
From shores innumerable we came
In droves like the beasts of the field.
We came ignorant, blinded, crippled,
Our tears still fresh on our cheeks,
The lash print red on our backs.
We came crouching in terror.
You quickened our fear-palsied souls
With messages of hope and courage.
You bade us trample on our fetters,
And stand erect before the world.

We swear to you, O Mother of Light,
That we, your foster-children,
Freemen knighted by the grace of God,
Will keep your arm forever lifted,
Your torch forever burning!

THE CRY OF HUMANITY

(A reply to "The Cry of France" in The Times of August 19)

"Welcome their hordes
To glut our swords."
Joseph I. C. Clarke.

I am Humanity
Calling through the ages
To all of you, my children!
Who are the hordes
That glut your swords?
Are those the guilty ones
Whose lifeblood overruns
The guttered fields of France?
Hell's banner flutters wide
As all of you advance.
The Teuton's dogged drive,
The Briton's bulldog pull,
The Slav's determined trudge,
The gallant dash of France—
What mean they all to me,
Bereft Humanity?
For I must mourn you all,
My children you who fall.

If one who wears a crown
  Gives way to ghastly whim,
Must millions, battered down,
  Be sacrificed to him?

I am Humanity
Calling through the ages
To all of you, my children!
Listen to your hearts
And send your flaming darts
Against the whole array
Who herded you for fray!
You need not seek for hordes
To glut your willing swords.
Turn plague and sword and fire,
Turn all your pent-up ire
Upon the few
Who slaughter you.
Turn hell and pest and flame
On those who play the game,
On those whose royal will
Sent all of you to kill.

I am Humanity
Calling through the ages
To all of you, my children!

MEN

I see them in a vision.
They are masters of death.
I see them
Laying mines
To annihilate thousands;
Sighting intrenchments
To guide their gun play;
Unleashing deadly gases
Wind driven, toward the enemy.
I see them in a vision,
These masters of death;
Not beasts snorting hell fire
Are they;
Just men—
Strong men, brave men,
Good men, wise men,
All bent on achieving—death.

I see them before me.
They are masters of life.
I see them
Digging tunnels
For the transit of thousands;
Rearing wonder structures of steel
To shelter their own kind;

In their laboratories
Enslaving air, water, earth and fire
For the service of millions.
I see them before me,
These masters of life;
Not angels shining in celestial glory
Are they;
Just men —
Strong men, brave men,
Good men, wise men,
All bent on promoting — life.

Men—just men.

TO WAR BARDS

Please note, my friend
Of lyric trend,
That cannon "boom"
To "gloom" or "doom;"
But when they "roar"
They roar of "war;"
That balls will "burst"
To rhymes like "curst;"
That men will "fall"
When countries "call;"
That flowing "blood"
Suggests a "flood;"
That "hopes of peace"
Will go with "cease."

But try to sell
The stuff, and — Well,
You'll know instead
What Sherman said.

SEA WAIFS

Salt fresh is the breeze from the sea;
  Brine sharp is its buoyant caress;
It speeds the foam shoreward in glee,
There is joy in its call, wild and free,
  "La jeunesse! La jeunesse!"

"Youth," it is laughing, "I bring
  On the hollow and crest of the surge;
And I carry the tang of the spring
In the spume that I scatter and fling,
  Yet my heart is a dirge!

"For voices of children I hear
  In the boom of the oncoming waves;
Voices that cry to me clear
From the heart of the turbulent mere,
  From their kelp covered graves.

"'Breeze of the sea!' from the tide
  Their pitiful voices ring,
'Take us with you for a ride,
We are the babies who died
  Too young to know spring!'"

WHERE DO WE STAND?

Where do we stand? Perhaps the answer leads
  Us back to days of old, to stubborn years
When power over soil and men through deeds
  Of pluck was won by gallant pioneers.
They met their doubts and perils face to face.
  The savage skulked within his wilds, but soon
The builders, sowers, reapers took his place.
  May we fall short of Standish, Smith and
    Boone?

Where do we stand? Injustice oversea
  Constrained our kin to rally and to arm;
We gathered hosts to fight for liberty
  From forge and shop, from forest, field, and
    farm.
We had our rustic leaders, Putnams, Waynes,
  A troop of daring volunteers, and one
Who led them all through many grim campaigns.
  Has time erased the name of Washington?

Where do we stand? In civil strife we fought
  For what we each regarded true and right;
And when, at last, the boon of peace was bought,
  We each repaired the breaches made in fight.
A sorry struggle, but it left the land
  In stronger union, blood-cemented, game,
The curse of slavery forever banned,
  A monument to Lincoln's hallowed name.

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Where do we stand? Look back upon them all.
What stirring feelings can these names inspire!
They key our hearts to throb at danger's call,
They fill our veins with patriotic fire.
How can we help but stand for dangers met,
For rights defended — liberty, forsooth,
For all the virtues troubled times beget?
Our heroes teach us courage, freedom, truth!

DEMOS: A RHAPSODY

(Suggested by the Russian Renaissance)

Lo! In the welter of storms they shall hear him,
Shaking the earth with his terrible voice;
Lo! In the chaos of hell they shall fear him;
Masters will tremble and bondmen rejoice!
Dumb through the cycle of numberless ages,
Unable to falter, unable to speak, —
At last like the beasts in their murderous rages
Battering bars of the hindering cages,
Demos will rouse himself . . . Demos will shriek!

Then all the little men,
Those who had prodded him,
Those who had mocked at him,

Fat little men who had held him in scorn,
Bald little men who had smugly dictated,
Mustachioed men who had strutted and prated,
Uniformeed men who had shouted, commanded,
Men in black robes who had flouted and branded,—
All of them hearing
The voice of the giant,
Obeying and fearing
His mandate defiant,
Dreading his gaunt, inarticulate being,—
All of them . . . fleeing,
Unheeding, unseeing,
Shedding their robes and their sceptres and uniforms
Casting aside all their honors and mummeries,
Flim-flam and flummeries
Trappings and state,
Downward will drop through the swift-rushing darkness
Leagues and leagues . . . where eternities wait!

And then from their caverns the millions will creep,
Wan wraiths of humans
Aroused from their sleep,
Reeling in hunger . . . frightened, unsteady,
Limp and unready.

Demos will croon to them
Just like a mother
Soothing her little one
Crying in sleep.

"Gone are the creatures
Of wars and disasters;
Fled are your overlords
Crowned heads and masters.
Pick up their robes and their sceptres and uniforms;
Gather their honors, their symbols and mummeries,
Flim-flam and flummeries,
All that you trembled at, worn by your 'sires,'
Pile them and kindle them;
Let all the fears you nursed
Vanish in prayer with the smoke of your fires."

"But who are you, O mysterious giant,
Pleading in thunder?
You who have roused us to life from the grave;
You who have cloven the chains of the slave;
Who are you that you should be obeyed?
Tell us . . . we know not . . . we're weak and afraid."

"Who am I?
By all that is broken
Shattered and crushed,
By all that you hope for,
By all that you deem
God-like and holy,
Know you not me?
I am the voice of you,
I am the goal of you,
Brawn, bones and blood of you,
Heart, mind and soul of you . . .
I am your dream!"

THE LIGHT ON THE MOUNTAIN

I walked through the darkling meadows
In the valley;
Slow-stepping, head bowed, I plodded on,
Unmindful of the shadows
That kept snuffing out the last glimmerings of day,
Leaving on earth only night,
Only night.

There was night within me, too,
I seemed to see millions of imploring hands
Raised high in prayer;
"Our backs are heavy laden, O Lord,
Our strength is spent;
In Thy infinite mercy have pity on us,
Thy children!"
I seemed to see anguish limned on faces
Too rigid-set for tears.
And as I walked through the darkling meadows
In the valley,
There was night in me, too.

Then I looked up at the scarred mountain side
Looming high above me;
And the giant cliffs were silhouetted
Athwart the waning daylight.

This, thought I, is reality.
Against it Man pounds his poor, soft fists;
And up to its top he looks for light;
But there is no light.

As I mused thus,
From the very peak
A ray of friendly lamplight
Filtered through the darkness.
It came from the window of a little shack
On the mountain side
And sought me out
Depressed and sore with doubt
As I wandered in the valley below.

Perhaps, thought I, that is God's way.
His will remains inscrutable
Though our woes be many;
But somewhere from His pinnacle
He sends down a gleam of hope
To us, who struggle on,
In the darkness of the world valley
As we pass from one infinity
To the other.

CALIBAN TO THE WAR-GOD

One eye that peeps above the ocean plane,
  My periscope, to sight a victim nigh;
And then, a steady crawling on; in vain
  She flies ahead; I mark her; she must die.

I chuckle when I see those merchant hulks
  Loom up to such dimensions. Little me
Is big enough for them; their clumsy bulks
  Will soon be rotting deep within the sea.

A funny thing occurred the other day;
  I crushed a liner's bow; she dropped like stone
And on her decks you should have seen the way
  Those mortals paled; I laughed to hear them
    groan.

I did it all, my master, just for you.
  A trifle! Caliban will play his part
To suit your will, augustness, sparing few
  For, like yourself, your servant has no heart.

NOCTURNE

"Watcher in the trenches,
How wears the night?"
"Nothing is seen in the midnight sky
But the trail of the death rockets flashing by:
So wears the night."

"Watcher in the trenches,
How wears the night?"
"A form in the starlight gasping its last,
The tail of a meteor shimmering past:
So wears the night."

"Watcher in the trenches,
How wears the night?"
"Darkness, darkness, then afar
The sudden glare of a man-made star:
So wears the night."

"Watcher in the trenches,
How wears the night?"
"Dawn flares up in the bloody east,
The vultures swoop to a carrion feast:
So wears the night."

"Dreamer in the tower,
How will it end?"
"The mists are shrouding a red, red sun,
Humans are blind and only One
May know the end."

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